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Standing the test of time: Revising the British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine.

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## **Executive Summary**

**Title:** Standing the test of time: Revising the British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine.

**Author:** Major Simon O'Herlihy, Royal Marines (United Kingdom).

**Thesis:** The recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan confirm the fundamental validity of the British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine, but offer lessons which should be incorporated into a doctrinal review.

**Discussion:** The current British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine, revised in July 2001, defines clearly the British neo-classic Western approach to counterinsurgency. It is rooted in the history of the Malayan Emergency, one that emphasizes minimum force, the rule of law, the importance of intelligence-led operations, civil-military co-operation and tactical adaptability and agility. The events since 9/11 and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan lead those within the military community to call for a review of counterinsurgency doctrine. But is there a reason to challenge this view? Do the experiences of Southern Iraq and Afghanistan mean that the British Army's principles are now outdated and that the ideas of Sir Robert Thompson and General Sir Frank Kitson are too reminiscent of fifty-year old rubber plantations and a shrinking Empire? This paper will examine whether the British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine requires revision in light of recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.

**Conclusion:** The current doctrine's principles and approach have stood up to the test of complex operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, circumstances for which they were not envisaged. This is because at the operational level, counterinsurgency remains a competition between several sides, each seeking to mobilize the population in its cause. There are, however, a number of areas for revision to make the doctrine more applicable and more relevant to today's insurgencies. Key areas for improvement are in the understanding of the information dimension, the requirement to correctly diagnose the character of the insurgency and the enabling effort across the multiple agencies involved in counterinsurgency.

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## *Preface*

This paper draws on personal experience having served recently in both Iraq and Afghanistan at company, battalion, brigade and divisional level. Primary sources include British campaign plans, operation orders and how these translated into effects on the ground. My intent has been to review the current British campaigns in Southern Iraq and Afghanistan in order to determine whether the guiding principles of counterinsurgency still apply or if a requirement exists to review counterinsurgency doctrine and make it more applicable.

Insurgency is, for the purposes of this paper, defined as the actions of a minority group within a state that are intent on forcing political change by means of a mixture of subversion, propaganda and military pressure, aiming to persuade or intimidate the broad mass of people to accept such a change. It is an organized armed political struggle, the goals of which may be diverse. Many terms have been used to describe those opposing the established authorities, terms such as guerrilla, revolutionary, terrorist, rebel, partisan, and enemy all spring to mind. In order to keep consistency throughout this paper the term insurgent has been used to describe those taking part in any activity designed to undermine or to overthrow the established authorities.

## **Introduction**

The British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine is published in part ten of its field manual. The current doctrine, revised in July 2001, deals with the challenges of applying military force to meet the threat of revolutionary war thrown up by the end of the Cold War and for the continued domestic insurgency in Northern Ireland. The field manual defines clearly the British Army's neo-classic Western approach to counterinsurgency. It is rooted in the history of the Malayan Emergency, one that emphasizes minimum force, the rule of law, the importance of intelligence-led operations, civil-military co-operation and tactical adaptability and agility.

The events since 9/11 and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan lead those within the military community to call for a review of counterinsurgency doctrine. This paper will examine whether the British Army's counterinsurgency doctrine requires revision in light of recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. The context will be established by reviewing, briefly, the role of doctrine, emphasizing the importance of doctrine's role in shaping how to think, the target audience for whom doctrine is written and the wider issues of countering contemporary insurgent activity.

## **The need for change**

Despite fighting the Taleban in Afghanistan since October 2001 and Shia insurgents in Southern Iraq since April 2004, there has been reluctance within the British Army Doctrine Committee to examine whether there was a need to review counterinsurgency doctrine. This was due as much to a general difficulty in acknowledging that the campaign was dealing principally with an insurgent problem in Southern Iraq as it was to an absence of evidence of a need for

change. There might also have been a view that there was nothing new in these insurgencies, and that the traditional British counterinsurgency approach would deliver.

Two other reasons can be used to explain why there was a general reluctance in recognizing the need for change: First, British commanders in Afghanistan and Iraq were demonstrating tactical adaptability by making their own adjustments to tactics and procedures; Secondly and more importantly, the true character of the insurgency changed through 2005 at the same time as the British increased commitment to Afghanistan. Understandably, doctrine writers did not want to attempt defining a solution to a problem that was in flux.

### **What is Doctrine?**

Before going any further into counterinsurgency doctrine, it is worth confirming what doctrine is, what it seeks to do and for whom. Doctrine's importance as a subject is clear from the volume of academic research into what is written and how it then translates, effectively or not, into actions. Doctrine provides the bridge from theory to practice, based on the understanding of experience. It informs the serviceman how to think about a problem. How far it goes to developing thought is determined through education, training and experience of the force for which it is written. Doctrine in itself does not guarantee success, but provides a basis for thought and changes provide evidence of military learning. As stated by General Sir John Chapple, former British Army Chief of the General Staff, "Doctrine is not in itself a prescription for success as a set of rules. What it does provide is the basis for thought, further selective study and reading which is the personal responsibility of all of us."<sup>1</sup>

Doctrine should clearly state the audience it is written for. British doctrine is largely written for the operational and upper tactical war fighter: the commander, the brigade and



divisional staff officer and the staff college student. It has much wider applicability but tactical lessons are formulated in separate tactical doctrinal notes. An important development over the last five years has been the development of joint doctrine, providing a clearer understanding for other services and agencies. For doctrine to be successful it should be written for and meet the needs of the practitioner; be acceptable to its audience; inform how to think; be teachable and most importantly be relevant.<sup>2</sup>

### **British Counterinsurgency Doctrine**

The origins and lineage of the British approach to counterinsurgency are traced through Colonel Charles Callwell, General Sir Gerald Templar, Sir Robert Thompson and General Sir Frank Kitson, who translated their experience and understanding into an approach for future campaigns. Sir Robert Thompson is arguably the greatest influence, emphasizing the pre-eminence of policy over any military solution. His principles of counterinsurgency<sup>3</sup> are reflected in current counterinsurgency doctrine with chapters on: Political Primacy and Political Aim; Coordinated Government Machinery; Intelligence and Information; Separating the Insurgent from his Support; Neutralizing the Insurgent; Longer Term Post-Insurgency Planning. Although the current doctrine is clear about the fundamentals and the principles, it is equally clear that each case of insurgency that the British Forces face has to be regarded as unique and dealt with in a way that reflects the circumstances: "The British have not developed a general antidote to the problem of insurgency... Not only is the threat changing, but so too is the environment in which an insurgent must be confronted."<sup>4</sup> The current doctrine goes further: "Theories, strategies and tactics come and go depending upon circumstances or merely intellectual fashion.

What remains a constant is the fact that insurgency and counterinsurgency are essentially about the battle to win and hold popular support, both at home and in the theatre of operations.”<sup>5</sup>

Is there now reason to challenge this view? Do the experiences of Southern Iraq and Afghanistan mean that the Army’s principles are now outdated and that the ideas of Thompson and Kitson are too reminiscent of fifty-year old rubber plantations and a shrinking Empire?

### **Identified Change**

Identified change is *the* driving force for doctrine development. It might come about through the perceived need to recognize a change and do something about it or through analysis that shows the situation has changed and a gap has emerged. It normally occurs when common practice is incorporated into doctrine. Whether or not the doctrine writer pre-empts change or has to respond to it, it takes time to transfer ideas into doctrine and publish them, teach them, allow the army to train with them and then for the change to be incorporated fully.

In the case of Iraq, the counterinsurgency doctrine did not change but operational and tactical practice did. At each stage of the campaign UK commanders found the doctrine relevant but its applicability varied as the campaign unfolded. The principles were in the circumstances, not in the doctrine. The campaign plan had to change as the character of the insurgency changed. What began as liberation through regime change, developed into an occupation. By the summer of 2003, it was stability and reconstruction. By the summer of 2004, the campaign had lurched into insurgency, but not an insurgency as the British knew it historically and certainly not what was being faced in the United States in the Sunni Triangle. Whilst the current British counterinsurgency doctrine does not relate to a new breed of insurgent exactly at each step, reality shows that British commanders applied its principles and its approach intuitively.

The situation in Afghanistan is more violent for the British forces than that experienced in Southern Iraq, but just as complicated. It is much more analogous to the insurgency experienced by David Galula and Sir Robert Thompson. It is a battle for power and popular support with the Taleban attempting to replace the Karzai government and to control the will of the population. The approach there is built on principles of counterinsurgency and the campaign is comprehensive, with military activity and economic development in support of political and diplomatic efforts.

### **Revising British Counterinsurgency Doctrine**

In examining the existing principles and approach of British counterinsurgency doctrine, and drawing on personal experience from UK operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, it is argued that nothing has changed so much as to invalidate the classic principles of counterinsurgency laid out in the current doctrine. As Charles Wolf and Nathan Leites observe in their RAND study in 1970, "each major insurgency is, in some sense, unique, as suggested by the diversity of areas and circumstances. But most of them have many shared features."<sup>6</sup> These shared features allow principles to be applied. Indeed the fundamentals need to be reinforced, particularly the requirements for political primacy, coordinated government response and the means by which the insurgents can be separated from their support.

If the classic principles are sound and the current British approach has proved itself very adaptable in the face of new circumstances it is important to continue to recognize that whilst there are lots of similarities between Belfast and Basra or Kuala Lumpur and Kandahar, every campaign has its own unique problems that require tailored solutions at a strategic, operational and tactical level. Although the fundamentals of British counterinsurgency doctrine may have

held true, there are definite areas in need of doctrinal review. The areas for review will now be examined in greater detail. They are: The Character of Contemporary Insurgency; Understanding the Environment; the Information Dimension; the Combined Approach; Civil Affairs; Transition and Security Sector Reform; Campaign Design; Operational Framework for Execution; and Measuring Effectiveness.

# **1. Character of Contemporary Insurgency:**

*"The rapid diffusion of technology, the growth of a multitude of transnational factors, and the consequences of increasing globalization and economic interdependence, have coalesced to create national security challenges remarkable for their complexity."*<sup>7</sup>

There is a requirement to update current counterinsurgency doctrine to reflect the character of 21<sup>st</sup> Century insurgents which is markedly different from that experienced by Thompson and Galula. Rather than being discrete conflicts between insurgents and the ruling authorities, they are nested in complex, multidimensional clashes having political, social, economic and cultural components or as General Rupert Smith has identified, "war amongst the people."<sup>8</sup> Dr Steve Metz has argued that contemporary insurgencies arise not only from the failure of the state, but from more general flaws in social, economic and cultural systems. Such conflicts involve a wide variety of players all struggling to fill the gaps created by a weak governing regime. In addition to what may be termed 'first forces' (the insurgent and the regime) and 'second forces' (outside supporters of the insurgents or the regime), there are 'third forces' (armed groups such as militias, criminal gangs and Private Military Companies) and 'forth forces' (the international media and nongovernmental organizations) all with the ability to effect a desired outcome.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the insurgencies faced today are not directed at taking over the functioning authority and the creation of counter-government. In Iraq multiple groups are aiming to paralyze and fragment the state rather than gain control of its apparatus and govern. This is viewed as a 'resistance' insurgency rather than a 'revolutionary' insurgency. Insurgents want to destroy the Iraqi state and feed off the carcass of 'ungoverned space'.<sup>10</sup> This is characterized by a lack of any unified strategy, compared with classical insurgents, to seize the instruments of state. The religious ideology of some modern insurgents, in particular al Qaeda-linked insurgencies, may not act to achieve any practical objective but earn spiritual favour through the act itself. The lack of strategy may not give victory to the insurgents but it compounds the problems for the counterinsurgent.

It must be noted that solely focusing on the political causes of an insurgency ignores the fact that insurgency provides a source of social empowerment and economic benefit. It provides an identity for the poor, uneducated and disempowered with no prospects. The tendency for insurgents to be involved with criminal activities such as the Taleban orchestrated opium trade in Southern Afghanistan, results in many insurgents being motivated more by greed than by political grievance. In many cases law enforcement should take precedent over military activities. Counterinsurgency cannot succeed unless it finds alternative sources of power and worth.

## **2. Understanding the Environment:**

*"The modern battlefield—a multidimensional, ill-defined place where a nation's ability to apply non-kinetic elements of national power is as important to victory as the application of firepower—is so revolutionary it demands that we educate our citizens to its consequences."*<sup>11</sup>

Closely related with understanding the character of the insurgency is a need to understand the 'human terrain' and the cultures within which we are operating. Truly understanding another culture requires more than speaking a language or knowing certain social customs so to not offend the local population; it requires an anthropological approach to understanding the population and the insurgents. One must understand the social power structures that informally govern societies as well as the internal motivations of the enemy and the people must be understood. One must establish what motivates them at the individual and social level must be established. One must determine whether the conflict is about religion, economics, ideology or other grievances.

Insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan understand the importance of cultural factors. Today's conflicts are catalyzed by the enemy's ability to tap into 'cultural narratives' of a host population, gain their support, and grow.<sup>12</sup> Our challenge is to understand this dynamic and learn to counter it. An updated doctrine must define what it means to be dealing with Islamic societies, in terms of beliefs, societal structures and dependencies, the way in which information is dealt with and attitudes to violence. Taken as a whole, these factors have considerable implications for future training and education.

Together with an understanding of the local population and the insurgency faced, there is a requirement to understand the reality of today's military environment. Coalition-building will almost always be required to reinforce the political legitimacy of counterinsurgency operations, but with it comes national caveats of coalition members, strained command and control architecture and dilution in unity of command. The NATO command structure in Afghanistan tends to support the axiom that the only thing worse than going to war with allies is going to war

without them.<sup>13</sup> Improved training and increasing experience of coalition operations may provide solutions for increasing unity of command.

### 3. Information Dimension:

*"In irregular warfare, superiority in the physical environment is of little value unless it can be translated into an advantage in the information environment."*<sup>14</sup>

The current British counterinsurgency doctrine is understated in its recognition and importance of the information dimension and the advances in technology over the last five years. The majority of counterinsurgency theorists acknowledge that the psychological dimension is crucial in such conflicts. T.E. Lawrence emphasized the power of ideas when he stated that "the printing press is the greatest weapon in the armoury of the modern commander."<sup>15</sup> Today he may view the internet as the greatest weapon as information technology amplifies the psychological effects of an insurgent incident by publicizing it to a much wider audience. Together with 24 hour media coverage, the internet has made acts of violence a more powerful instrument than at any time previously. "Strategically, insurgent campaigns have shifted from military campaigns supported by information operations to strategic communications campaigns supported by guerilla and terrorist operations."<sup>16</sup> The internet has also created a 'virtual sanctuary' for insurgents beyond the reach of counterinsurgents; facilitating financial transfers, communication, planning, intelligence and recruitment in what has been called cyber mobilization or 'electronic levee en masse.'<sup>17</sup>

The modern insurgent can also manipulate technology to extend his influence by displacing reality with perceptions and exploiting tactical success out of proportion to their operational effect. Rather than just the physical consequences of a particular action, the

psychological impact must also be considered. Dr David Kilcullen reflects "in the battlefield, popular perceptions and rumor are more important than a hundred tanks."<sup>18</sup>

Personal experience demonstrates a requirement for far greater improvements to be made in non-kinetic influence operations to compete in the information arena. There is a perceived view within combat units fighting insurgents that kinetic operations are superior in all respects. This view is reinforced by the lack of specialist trained information operations advisors in brigade and division headquarters to contend this view. Capability improvements in the areas of information and media operations<sup>19</sup> must be reinforced by commanders being intimately involved in ensuring that the information aspects of military operations are considered at all times.

Information operations also need to be delegated and controlled at the lowest level, certainly at battalion and even company level to meet what Galula recognized from his experience in Algeria: "...propaganda is most effective when its substance deals with local events, with problems with which the population is directly concerned, and when it is conducted on a person-to person basis or with specific groups... It is hardly possible to 'pre-cook' this sort of propaganda at a high level."<sup>20</sup> Improvements are required in technological and organisational capability to disseminate news releases rapidly and counter enemy propaganda.

#### 4. Combined Approach:

*"There is no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not primarily a military activity."*<sup>21</sup>

British doctrine recognizes that countering insurgency is not simply the application of one military force against another. If as stated in Galula's writings, the balance of effort in any counterinsurgency campaign is at least 80 percent political and 20 percent military,<sup>22</sup> any review



must be developed with an interagency approach or in British terminology – the ‘Comprehensive Approach.’ General Kitson understood this only too well, “the problem is more difficult because so many of the people who will be most influential in determining success or failure are not in the armed forces at all. They are politicians, civil servants, local government officials and police, in the area where the insurgency is taking place.”<sup>23</sup>

In reality, it must be acknowledged that during the initial stages of a counterinsurgency campaign, the military will carry much greater responsibility, contributing largely to the 80 percent of political effort. Until some form of security can be won, many government and non-governmental actors will not be present. However, greater emphasis should be made in doctrine to reflect the full use of all instruments of national power, coordinated in the campaign plan. There is a requirement for a comprehensive overview of what each military, interagency, and non-governmental partner should contribute in counterinsurgency conflicts. Instead, there is a large gap between what we optimally need to succeed and the combined resources our government can bring to bear. This ‘capabilities gap’ is not the fault of any single agency, but is the result of not having clearly defined what it expects each instrument of national power to contribute.

Any doctrinal review must attempt to reach out across the interagency divide and get an agreed mandate. For the British Army Doctrine Committee this will require engaging members from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Cabinet Office Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU). There is a direct correlation between how well our operations are integrated at the military-interagency level and how successful we are in accomplishing our policy goals,<sup>24</sup> as highlighted in a seminar held at the Royal United Services Institution (RUSI) in February 1969 on ‘Lessons from the

Vietnam War,' where a group of senior British officers and civilians concluded that the lack of unified control in the field was one of the major errors made.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, there continues to be a lack of organizational and resource effort directed towards this weakness.

## 5. Civil Affairs:<sup>26</sup>

*"My focus (the military main effort) is reconstruction in the Afghan Development Zone. Insecurity is currently partially precluding that reconstruction and our task is to overcome that insecurity."*<sup>27</sup>

The counterinsurgency efforts in the last 6 years in Iraq and Afghanistan have seen a convergence of military and non-military tasks, with a greater role being played by the armed forces in economic reconstruction and humanitarian activities. The development of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) is evidence of this shift towards military forces conducting nation building tasks. In most of the UK Area of Operations in Southern Afghanistan, indigenous capacity is weak and nongovernmental organizations are unable to work due to real or perceived lack of security.

There is a requirement to expand upon the doctrinal detail regarding the contribution military-led reconstruction operations make in a unified counterinsurgency campaign. These operations require the allocation of significant combat support elements and need to be synchronized with government resources. Military-led reconstruction operations provide a buffer zone in time and space for indigenous capacity to backfill existing projects and allow for the integration of nongovernmental organizations. They also provide the counterinsurgent with a tool to shift support of the populace away from the insurgents, acting as an 'urban ink spot'<sup>28</sup>. In this aspect they must be coordinated with information operations. The priority of effort associated with reconstruction is highlighted in the 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines mission

statement for its UK Task Force operations in Southern Afghanistan from September 2006 to March 2007: "The Joint UKTF is to assist the local government to build its capacity, authority and influence and to prioritise and synchronise reconstruction and development programs alongside fully integrated and joint security ops in order to set the conditions for a secure and stable Helmand Province."<sup>29</sup>

Reconstruction projects have to begin at the very beginning of the campaign when their impact in winning over the population will have its greatest effect. Reconstruction activities should attempt to use local support as much as possible, teaching new skills and rewarding local contractors. They must also be coordinated with local officials to deliver what is needed. After the fall of Saddam Hussein in April 2003, elements of 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines quickly transitioned to reconstruction tasks. The deputy Brigade Commander Colonel Steve Cox was known by locals as the 'Mayor of Um Qasr' for his efforts in coordinating municipal projects. Similarly, Major General Peter Chiarelli responsible for the Baghdad area of operations in 2004 referred in briefings to his division's SWETI ops: Sewage, Water, Electricity, Trash and Information.<sup>30</sup>

Where no PRTs exist, combat units must employ Quick Impact Projects to deliver smaller but arguably more tangible benefits to the local population. However, it must be stressed that a careful understanding of the local population is required before any project begins. In Helmand Province, a multitude of tribal and political allegiances are in constant conflict resulting in many projects being delayed or postponed because of the negative impact a project may bring in favoring a particular side. Extensive Human Intelligence (HUMINT) is a precursor to any reconstruction operation to assess that the right project is delivered to the right people at the right time. As General Rupert Smith stated "There is no such thing as impartial governance or

humanitarian assistance. In this environment, every time you help someone, you hurt someone else.”<sup>31</sup>

## 6. Transition and Security Sector Reform (SSR):

*“Under the terms of UNSCR 1546, MND(SE), in close partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces and the civil authorities, is to neutralise Anti Iraqi Forces and, in parallel, support the development of a robust, self-reliant and credible Iraqi security capability, in order to allow the Iraq Government to defeat the insurgency.”*<sup>32</sup>

The experience of the British counterinsurgency effort in the MND (SE) [Multinational Division (South East)] of Southern Iraq highlights a key area of doctrinal update: an increased emphasis on security sector reform and transition as an exit strategy. The concept of Transition was developed in 2005 by the Divisional Commander Major General Riley and expanded on by Major General Dutton as an answer to the question of what was to happen after the Iraqi elections and, important for the UK, how could it repudiate the accusation of occupation. It is important to acknowledge the role that Security Sector Reform (SSR) plays in leading to transition; SSR or Military Training Teams (MiTT) is not just to train and equip, rather it is the creation of host nation institutions that can train and equip their own people, administer and support them.

A foreign army can never ‘win’ a counterinsurgency, it can only assist and help create the conditions for success by the indigenous government. As soon as possible the burden of security must rest with the indigenous security forces. Partnering and joint operations with our own forces create greater confidence for the local populace in their security apparatus and in their own governing bodies. The lessons from Iraq have been influential to the training of Afghan Security Forces in Helmand Province. One of the key points is that significant resources have to

be allocated to SSR as this is the exit strategy. In Southern Afghanistan entire British battalions have formed Operational and Mentoring Liaison Teams (OMLT) to provide SSR to Afghan Kandaks, rather than the piecemeal approach of small training teams in Iraq in 2003-2005. This approach is a large scale version of the Combined Action Platoons (CAP) in Vietnam.<sup>33</sup>

An area of weakness the British have recently faced is in the training and mentoring of indigenous police forces. A viable and credible police force that enforces the rule of law is critical to political success in counterinsurgency operations. As stated in current USMC doctrine 'in the long run, only a local police force can gain the trust of the local populace and penetrate a community thoroughly and completely in order to gain intelligence needed to combat and marginalize the irregular warrior'.<sup>34</sup> British police training advisors have often struggled to make the leap from their own experiences of policing in the English counties to that of policing in Basra or Helmand. The exception to this has been the support provided by members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

## 7. Campaign Design:

*"The commander uses his operational design to visualize, describe, and direct those actions necessary to accomplish his assigned mission."*<sup>35</sup>

It is not within the scope of this paper to review current thinking on campaign design; however, it is an area that needs to be considered in any review of British counterinsurgency doctrine. The current doctrine offers limited detail on campaign planning apart from a brief mention of Mission Analysis and the creation of a synchronized campaign plan. Campaign design is about understanding and defining the problem. It translates operational requirements into tactical guidance<sup>36</sup> and must precede Mission Analysis, although it continues throughout

planning and execution. The complexities of counterinsurgency demand a comprehensive campaign design in order to provide a clear understanding of the political purpose and strategic objectives. The campaign design must consider the protracted nature, cultural aspects, environmental factors and political causes of the insurgency.

Recent experience of Iraq and Afghanistan has illustrated the need for a 'comprehensive approach' to counterinsurgency, combining all elements of national power. A well executed campaign design should synchronize all available instruments of national power as well as coalition capabilities. It provides an understanding of the strengths and vulnerabilities of both partners and adversaries which is paramount in developing an effective counterinsurgency plan.

#### 8. An Operational Framework for Execution:

*"I will impose and spread contagious security within the Province. I will secure the Afghan Development Zone in order to set the conditions for reconstruction and development to flourish. I will reassure the people and persuade them to support the Government of Afghanistan and conform to its intent. Thus, the people will marginalise the enemy. These effects will endure through the development of credible Afghan security institution."*<sup>37</sup>

Establishing an operational framework for counterinsurgency will first and foremost be focused on securing the population because the population is the source from which the Host Nation will gain its strength, the center of gravity. How this is to be achieved uses the approach drawn directly from Thompson's basic operational concept of Clear-Hold-Winning-Won<sup>38</sup> and is reinforced by Galula's approach of implementing strategy into tactical actions.<sup>39</sup> Analysis of these approaches and recent experience from Iraq and Afghanistan shows that there are three main elements to effective counter-insurgency operations which must be reflected in any review of doctrine. They are: securing insurgent infected areas, holding those areas that have been secured and building governance, confidence and stability. Throughout there will be constant

engagement with the population. Once the Secure-Hold-Build framework is successfully applied, then training and equipping indigenous forces can be accelerated and transition can occur.

During Secure-Hold-Build operations the counterinsurgents must live with the population to prove that they can provide safety and establish rule of law. In Southern Afghanistan this has taken the form of Combat Out-Posts (COPs) of Platoon to Company strength forces, continually interacting with the indigenous population and understanding the 'human terrain'. With security improvements is the provision of basic services and stimulation of local economies. Concurrent with these operations is the ongoing process of organizing, training and equipping indigenous security forces to take over security tasks. The spread of 'contagious security' and economic growth is in keeping with the oil spot theory of Marshal Lyautey. However, the difficulty faced in Southern Afghanistan has been in the separation of forces between COPs, allowing insurgent freedom of movement between secured areas.

#### 9. Measuring Effectiveness:

*"In a political war, where secrecy and subversion are the central facts, the only real measure of who is winning or losing is in the attitude of the people."*<sup>40</sup>

One of the distinguishing characteristics of counterinsurgency is the difficulty and complexity of finding reliable indicators of success. It is hard to be clear about winning and losing.<sup>41</sup> Vast amount of data collected but little in the way of a framework to interpret success. The current counterinsurgency doctrine fails to mention any measures of effectiveness (MOE) as to how the military's actions are achieving their goals. Of course any MOE will be dependent upon the situation being faced and the stage of the insurgency, but there appears to be a current

trend to assess military operational effectiveness by focusing towards numbers of engagements, casualties taken, arrests or weapon caches found, or in ground taken and held. This is all centered on the insurgent rather than the insurgency, a very kinetic approach.

MOE should be continually refined as the operation progresses and should cover all elements of the lines of operation in social, informational, military and economic issues. Great care must be applied here as counterinsurgency operations often involve more complex societal issues that may not lend themselves to quantifiable MOE. Subjective or intuitive assessment must not be replaced by an exclusive focus on data.<sup>42</sup>

Military operations that counter the sustainability and legitimacy of the insurgents and support the stability of the general situation seem to be highly influential.<sup>43</sup> In both the Philippines and Malaya a good indicator was the rate at which middle and higher-level officers and cadres in the insurgent organization were acquired by defection or capture. In Vietnam, this can be illustrated with the 'Chieu Hoi' defector program<sup>44</sup> and in Iraq the TIPs program. There is a requirement to move away from the body count towards measures of reconstruction and development, growth in economic activity, increased influence by local leaders and enhanced effectiveness of indigenous security forces. It is with this latter MOE that permits transition and the handing over of battlespace.

## **Conclusion**

Any review of British counterinsurgency doctrine must ensure its approach remains well founded on experience and relevant for operations in the near future. In general terms, the current doctrine's principles and approach have stood up to the test of complex operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, circumstances for which they were not envisaged. This is because at the



operational level counterinsurgency remains a competition between several sides, each seeking to mobilize the population in its cause. The people have remained the prize.

British commanders have used the current doctrine intuitively to modify the campaign as the character of insurgency changed. However, this paper has highlighted a number of areas for revision to make the doctrine more applicable and more relevant to today's insurgencies. Key areas for improvement are in the understanding of the information dimension, the requirement to correctly diagnose the character of the insurgency and the enabling effort across the multiple agencies involved in counterinsurgency.

It is contended that Kitson and Thompson remain relevant today, they simply have to be used sensibly and what they say adjusted to today's circumstances. It was Kitson, after all, who stressed the point that singling out a particular type of threat (at that time, communism) was not the issue, rather it was that the Army had to recognize the type of campaigns for which it would be required and to be organized, trained and equipped for.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, it is worth noting that adapting an approach to counterinsurgency is not necessarily about updating training or doctrine. It is a question of opening minds to allow them to apply rigor and intellect to the circumstances they find themselves in. As General Kizley stated in a RUSI counterinsurgency symposium: "we must be careful not to justify our doctrine on one experience. Remember that the law is not in the doctrine, it is in the circumstances. We need to look at Iraq as a whole. There is a particular danger, redolent of arrogance, if we concentrate solely on our own experience."<sup>46</sup>

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005), p 7.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Alexander Alderson, "US COIN Doctrine and Practice: An Ally's Perspective," *Parameters*, Winter 2007-2008, p 37.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson's principles of counterinsurgency are stated in *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p 50.

1. The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable.
2. The government must function within the law.
3. The government must have an overall plan.
4. The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerillas.
5. In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.

<sup>4</sup> Army Field Manual, Vol. 1 Combined Arms Operations, Part 10 *Counter Insurgency Operations*, p B-2-1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid p B-3-1.

<sup>6</sup> Nathan Leites, & Charles Wolfe Jr, *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (RAND Organization, California, February 1970), p 2.

<sup>7</sup> General Charles C. Krulak, *The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War*. (Marines Magazine, January 1999).

<sup>8</sup> General Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 2007), p 3.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Metz, "New Challenges and Old Concepts: Understanding 21<sup>st</sup> Century Insurgency," *Parameters*, Winter 2007-2008.

<sup>10</sup> David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency Redux*, (Washington, 2007), p 4.

<sup>11</sup> Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli & Major Stephen Smith, "Learning from our Modern Wars," *Military Review*, Sep-Oct 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Ambassador Eric Edelman, "Remarks made at the Department of State and Department of Defense Counterinsurgency Conference," Washington DC, 28 September 2006.

<sup>13</sup> Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli & Major Stephen Smith, "Learning from our Modern Wars," *Military Review*, Sep-Oct 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *The transformation of strategic affairs* (London, 2006), p 20.

<sup>15</sup> TE Lawrence from Robert Asprey's *War in the Shadows*, quoted in Nagl, John A. *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005), p 24.

<sup>16</sup> T.X Hammes, "Fourth Generation Evolves, Fifth Emerges," *Military Review* May-June 2007, p 14.

<sup>17</sup> David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency Redux*, p 3.

<sup>18</sup> David Kilcullen, 28 Articles. *Fundamentals of Company Level Counterinsurgency* (March 2006), p 106.

<sup>19</sup> UK definition of Public Affairs.

<sup>20</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964, reprinted 2006), p 86.

- <sup>21</sup> Frank Kitson, *Bunch of Five*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 283.
- <sup>22</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, p 63.
- <sup>23</sup> Frank Kitson, "Practical aspects of COIN" in *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-keeping* (London: Faber, 1971).
- <sup>24</sup> Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli & Major Stephen Smith, "Learning from our Modern Wars," *Military Review*, Sep-Oct 2007, p 9.
- <sup>25</sup> Robert R Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on US-GVN Performance in Vietnam* (RAND Organization, California, August 1972), p 79.
- <sup>26</sup> Defined in UK COIN doctrine Ch 12: Civil Affairs is defined as "any question relating to relations in wartime between the commander of an armed force and the civilian population and governments where the force is employed, and which is settled on the basis of mutual agreement, official or otherwise."
- <sup>27</sup> Brigadier J Thomas, *United Kingdom Task Force (Helmand) Operational Design*, 13 Oct 06.
- <sup>28</sup> David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency: Theory & Practice*, Lecture at MCU 19<sup>th</sup> February 2008.
- <sup>29</sup> United Kingdom Task Force (Helmand), *Op Herrick 5 (H5) Base Line Op Order 001*, 16 Oct 06.
- <sup>30</sup> Brigadier Alwyn-Foster, "Changing the Army for COIN ops," *Military Review*, Nov/Dec 2005, p 5.
- <sup>31</sup> UK Joint Warfare Publication 3-50: *Peace Support Operations*.
- <sup>32</sup> MND(SE) Operations Order 02/05.
- <sup>33</sup> Austin Long, *On 'Other War' – Lessons from five decades of RAND COIN research*, (RAND Corporation, 2006), p 43.
- <sup>34</sup> USMC – *Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats*, p 68.
- <sup>35</sup> MCDP 1-0 Marine Corps Operations, Sec 6-3.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> Brigadier J Thomas, *United Kingdom Task Force (Helmand) Operational Design*, 13 Oct 06.
- <sup>38</sup> Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1970), p 111-115.
- <sup>39</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Ch 7.
- <sup>40</sup> William Colby, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p 259.
- <sup>41</sup> Nathan Leites & Charles Wolfe Jr, *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (RAND Organization, California, February 1970), p 86.
- <sup>42</sup> FM3-24, P 4-26.
- <sup>43</sup> Clancy & Crosset - *Parameters* Summer 2007, p 98.
- <sup>44</sup> Nathan Leites & Charles Wolfe Jr, *Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic essay on Insurgent Conflicts* (RAND Organization, California, February 1970), p 88.
- <sup>45</sup> Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency, Peace-keeping* (London: Faber, 1971), p 13.
- <sup>46</sup> Lt Gen Sir John Kiszley, *RUSI Journal*, Vol 152, No 4, August 2007.

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